

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-15 stand canceled.

The amendment leaves claims 16-20 pending.

Claim 16 has been amended to independent form, including the limitation of its prior parent claims, and has also been amended to particularly and affirmatively distinguish over the references. Amended claim 16 requires that the filter media (34) have an axial height (up-down in Fig. 4) between first and second axial ends (upper end and lower end) at respective first and second ends caps (22 and 24), and that each of the defined first, second, third and fourth sleeves (88, 90, 92, 94) have an axial height less than the noted axial height of the filter media (34).

Claim 16 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over GB 2079178 in view of Clausen et al. U.S. Patent 5,753,120. Even if the required axially overlapped telescoped non-threaded axially slidable sleeve requirement of claim 16 is applied by Clausen '120 as proposed, the result still does not meet the limitations now set forth in amended claim 16 requiring that each of the first through fourth sleeves (88-94) have an axial height less than the axial height of the filter media (34). This is shown in Fig. 4, with sleeves 88 and 90 engaging each other in axially overlapped telescoped non-threaded axially slidable relation at 96, and with third and fourth sleeves 92 and 94 engaging each other in axially overlapped telescoped non-threaded axially slidable relation at 98, with each of the first through fourth sleeves 88-94 satisfying the noted height limitation and meeting its mating sleeve as shown. Consideration and allowance of claim 16 is respectfully requested.

Claim 17 depends from claim 16 and is believed allowable for the reasons noted above. Furthermore, claim 17 has been amended and further requires that the first stop (120, Fig. 4) engaging the other of the first and second sleeves (90) be axially spaced between the noted first and second axial ends of the filter media (34), and requires that the second stop (122) engaging the other of the third and fourth sleeves (94) be spaced axially between the noted first and second axial ends of the filter media (34). This construction is believed clearly distinct over and not suggested in the cumulative teachings of the references.

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Amended claim 18 depends from claim 16 and is believed allowable for the reasons noted above. Furthermore, claim 18 defines a subcombination which is believed allowable.

Amended claim 19 depends from claim 16 and is believed allowable for the reasons noted above. Furthermore, claim 19 requires a pair of seals (84, 86) each provided by a respective annular sealing bead (96, 98) around a respective said sleeve (90, 94) at a respective one of said columns (42, 44) and sealing the respective sub-interior (46, 48) of the respective column (42, 44) from the interior (32) of the filter media (30) to block contaminant flow therebetween. Claim 19 requires that a first of the seals (84) be between the first and second sleeves (88, 90), and that a second of the seals (86) be between the third and fourth sleeves (92, 94), and that each of the first and second seals (84, 86) be laterally spaced from the noted axial flow opening (28) in non-circumscribing relation, and that the first and second seals (84, 86) be laterally spaced from each other on laterally distally opposite sides of the axial flow opening (28). The subcombination defined in claim 19 is believed allowable.

Amended claim 20 depends from claim 16 and is believed allowable for the reasons noted above. Furthermore, claim 20 defines a subcombination which is believed allowable.

It is believed that this application is in condition for allowance with claims 16-20, and such action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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